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Inside Information

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WOMEN GOVERNMENT SPOKESPERSONS TRUSTED

Government agencies, if they would like to enjoy more public trust, might do well to hide their "spokesmen" behind backroom desks and hire women in their places, according to a recent Boston University study.

The study, conducted by Dr. George Gitter, professor of communication research, and Casey Coburn, assistant director of public relations at the university, found that the public trusts women spokespersons more than men.

The most dramatic difference, however, was found in how much more trusted were women spokespersons for a government agency as compared with men in the same position.

The study also investigated if the spokesperson's label--"public relations," "public affairs," "public information," or "communication" made a difference in the level of trust ascribed to them.

It makes little difference if spokespersons are identified as "public relations," "public affairs" or "public information," since the study indicated that the three titles were accorded about the same level of trust from the public. A spokesperson identified with a "communication" label, however, was trusted significantly less than the others. Overall, nonprofit agencies were accorded the highest public trust, with large corporations and government following.

The study also found that women trusted others more than did men.

For additional information contact Dr. Gitter, School of Public Communication, Boston University, 640 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215, or call (617) 353-3472 or 232-4030.

ACE REGIONAL MEETINGS SCHEDULED

Members of the Agricultural Communicators in Education (ACE) organization from two regions will hold their first joint meeting and workshop this year.

On May 16-19 members of the ACE Northeast and DC regions will hold their annual workshops at the National 4-H Center in Bethesda, Md.

University of Minnesota will host the annual ACE North Central regional meeting April 28-30. Theme will be "Shifting Gears in Changing Times."

NEWS ABOUT FORMER USDA INFORMATION FOLKS

Hal Taylor, retired USDA public affairs director and now national office coordinator for Agricultural Communicators in Education, is off on another foreign assignment. This time it's a two-month jaunt to Nepal, from late January to early March, on an agricultural communications mission. He made two trips to Indonesia last year.

Jim Webster, former USDA assistant secretary for governmental and public affairs, recently announced acquisition of the DAIRY INDUSTRY NEWSLETTER. He added the 22-year-old dairy letter as "the first step in Webster Communications Corporation's growth strategy." His FOOD & FIBER LETTER, first newsletter of his operations, will remain the "flagship" of the newsletter fleet.

Ed Goodpaster, former USDA deputy assistant secretary for governmental and public affairs, has been named president and publisher of GRIT, the 100-year-old national weekly family newspaper published in Williamsport, Pa. Goodpaster says GRIT, with over a million circulation, will continue to serve households of small-town and rural America as it has for a century.

Jack Keyser, former head of the public liaison staff in USDA's Office of Governmental & Public Affairs, is now a public affairs officer for the Rockefeller Foundation's International Institute for Tropical Agriculture in western Africa. Jan Keyser, public affairs specialist with USDA's Farmers Home Administration, resigned her position to join her husband in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Al Sweeney, another public affairs specialist with Farmers Home Administration, was named director of public affairs with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, a senior executive service position.

TWO USDA COMMUNICATORS RETIRE

Two well-known public information officers have retired--Frank Jeter, Jr., with the Soil Conservation Service at Raleigh, N.C., and Eleanor Ferris, with the Science & Education Director's Office in Washington, D.C.

Frank Jeter made Christmas Eve his last official day of work after 41 years of public information service with USDA.

Jeter had been with SCS at Raleigh for more than 10 years. Previously he worked for the Extension Service and Agricultural Stabilization & Conservation Service in Washington, D.C., for many years.

Eleanor Ferris retired January 8 after serving various USDA agencies for nearly 25 years.

Ferris had been with the S&E staff for the past three years. Previously she worked for the Food Safety & Quality Service (now the Food Safety & Inspection Service) and most of her career for the Agricultural Marketing Service.

THREE USDA DESIGNERS RECOGNIZED

Three designers with USDA's Office of Governmental & Public Affairs were recently recognized in a national design magazine.

PRINT magazine's first design annual shows the work of Sara Tweedie and Debbie Shelton of the USDA Design Center and David Sutton, assistant public affairs director for graphic arts.

The USDA publications selected which represent the designers' work were "Trees in Our National Forest" and two titles from the USDA combined forest pest research and development program. The selections were chosen from over 3,000 submissions from designers across the country. Of the 700 pieces shown in PRINT's annual, only a few were selected from government designers.

OPENING FOR ARS INFORMATION SPECIALIST

The Southern regional office of USDA's Agricultural Research Service at New Orleans, La., has announced an opening for a GS-1035-9 or GS-1035-11 public affairs specialist. The incumbent interprets agricultural research to make it understandable and useful to news media and other users, analyzes research information needs, uses a variety of media to inform the public, writes news releases and features and interviews ARS scientists at different agency locations.

Applicant must have skills in written and oral communication, interpersonal relations and analytical skill to address audiences of different understanding levels at the GS-9 level, and to address such audiences to achieve comprehension of various viewpoints at the GS-11 level.

Applications must be submitted by February 1 to L. G. Burkes, Southern Regional Office, Agricultural Research Service, USDA, P.O. Box 53326, New Orleans, LA 70153.

NEW YORK CLIP ART BOOK AVAILABLE

A new clip art book has been printed by Cornell University's Cooperative Extension news service, according to Liz Bauman, media services extension specialist at Cornell.

It contains 85 pages of black and white line drawings, most of which are original pieces done by Cornell University's artists, with a few from USDA.

There are 341 different drawings in the book. Most of them are printed in two or three sizes, Bauman said. The book includes home economics, 4-H and agricultural subjects, such as people, finances, home, energy, transportation, food, gardening, animals, farm scenes, crops, farm equipment and typeset subject headings.

The 1981 clip art book may be ordered, at \$7.50 per copy (checks payable to Cornell University), from: Susan Alexander, Media Services, G-20 Van Rensselaer Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853.

MONEY SAVING TIP IN PRINTING OFFERED

When seeking a special effect, publications editors sometimes order text lines to be set in 16-point or larger type. The U.S. Government Printing Office contract terms require that display type--all type larger than 14-point--be charged at greater prices than smaller type. If saving costs is important in a particular job, GPO says to stick to 14-point or smaller type.

Another reminder: If larger type is used, allow more white space between lines to maintain a legible and eye-pleasing product. USDA editors should follow specifications in the USDA Visual Management Manual which has already established the appropriate leading for each line length used by USDA.

ABOUT 10% USDA EMPLOYEES IN WASHINGTON

According to statistics reported by USDA's Office of Personnel, about 10 percent of the 128,595 USDA employees work in the Washington, D.C., area. Of the 128,595 employees nationwide at the beginning of the fiscal year, more than a third were part-time, intermittent and other than permanent full-time employees. Permanent full-time employees totaled 83,971. In Washington, D.C., about 90 percent of the 13,355 USDA employees, or 11,791 had permanent full-time status.

IDAHO EDITOR OFFERS ATTRIBUTION TIP

University of Idaho's agricultural information head, Bill Stellmon, a few weeks ago offered a tip on attribution in his newsletter for other communicators in the state, which is worth repeating for broader readership.

Stellmon said rarely is there a program specialist, agency official or county extension agent who has not demanded to know why a news release has to be written with the attribution, "Davis said," "said Jones," or "according to Smith."

The common complaint is that the "said" attribution sounds boring and repetitive.

Stellmon said that may be, but there's a good reason for it. "Newspaper style requires that every statement in a news story be clearly attributed to the person who made it.

"Left to their own devices, agents and specialist will often dress up attribution," he said. Rather than "saying," they "point out" or "note" or do even more interesting things.

Stellmon said newspapers do not like to use "point out" or "note" since only a fact can be pointed out or noted--and they cannot allow themselves to be 100 percent sure that what is said in the news release is a fact. "It may be a boring word, but it's a little one and over soon," Stellmon said. "It protects you from opinions masquerading as facts."

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EVALUATION & RESEARCH

What's the difference between evaluation and research in communications?

Jane Roth, evaluation specialist with USDA's Cooperative State Research Service, explained the difference in a recent issue of CSRS' Research Information Letter edited by Mason Miller.

Roth said evaluations assess the worth of particular programs, products or processes.

They are undertaken to improve an existing effort, or decide if it should continue.

So any study comparing existing communication strategies or equipment, then is evaluation. Often the desire is to provide decision makers with useful information for selecting among options.

Research, on the other hand, tries to answer questions of why something functions as it does, or to invent a new or better program, product or process. It is geared to the discovery of new knowledge and the examination of relationships, Roth said.

Examples would be studies of where people get their information, of how people process the information they get, of the behavior of media in the use of releases, etc.

Obviously, the two overlap--research and evaluation--partly because the same researcher often does both and addresses both in his or her writings. So, the question back from Ross: Why and when does the difference make a difference?

INSIDE INFORMATION is published for distribution to public affairs and information staff members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its agencies, State Departments of Agriculture and Land Grant Universities. Any items, comments and inquiries should be addressed to Stan W. Prochaska, Assistant Public Affairs Director, Room 407-A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250, to AGR002 on the Dialcom INTERCOMM system or AGN1DA05 on the AGNET system, or call (202) 447-7454.